



Puente Democrático

The struggle against anti-Semitism and the promotion of Religious Tolerance in Argentina

2014 Annual Report

Monitoring of anti-Semite comments on news websites of Argentina

For this work we have monitored the anti-Semite expressions published in discussion forums in different news story in the websites of newspapers “La Nación” and “Clarín” and the news portal “Infobae”.

The work consisted of selecting those comments expressing a phobia against Jews in an ostensible or veiled way. We are saying in a veiled way because many critical comments about Israel or about the Zionist Movement are hiding a real Jewish rejection.

During 2014, a total of 256 news stories were analyzed whereof 156 were published in “La Nación”, 99 in “Clarín” and 1 in “Infobae”, registering 4384 comments with anti-Semite expressions.

The current report includes examples of anti-Semite expressions for each of the categories used, registered results and trends during 2014 and finally some reflections about the challenge the media has to face regarding the growth of intolerance on the internet.

By Verónica E. Repond and Gabriel C. Salvia



The Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation, established in February 2003, whose mission consists in promoting democratic values; observing the political, economic and institutional performance and to formulate public policies proposals which contribute to a good governance and persons' welfare.

In its work to promote democratic values, CADAL has started in October 2013 implementing the "Struggle against anti-Semitism and promotion of Religious Tolerance" project thanks to "Pan American Development Foundation's" support (PADF). The project included the realization of educational activities, organization of events, elaboration of publications and the implementation of a monthly monitoring of anti-Semite comments in Argentine news websites.

With regard to educational activities, Historian Ricardo López Göttig, CADAL's academic counselor, has organized introductory speeches about the "Origin, myths and anti-Semitism influence around the world" at University of Belgrano (UB), University of Salvador (USAL), Catholic University of Argentina (UCA), University of Palermo (UP) and seven classes for the seminar "History of Anti-Semitism" at CEMA University (UCEMA). The eighth class which completed the seminar was a guided tour of the Holocaust Museum of Buenos Aires.

Regarding the events, the "Anti-Semitism on the internet and the freedom of expression" conference was organized at the Argentinian press auditorium on August 21, 2014. On that occasion Ariel Seidler (Director of

the "Observatorio Web), Sergio Widder (Director of América Latina del Centro Simón Wiesenthal) and Sergio Danishewsky (Pro secretary of the redaction of the newspaper "Clarín") were guest speakers. Furthermore, a panel was included in the International Conference of Remembrance of Victims of Totalitarianism on August 23, 2014, at University of CEMA wherein the book "El rechazo mundial a los judíos" was presented by its author, journalist and historian Daniel Muchnik with comments by Sybil Rhodes and Guillermo Yanco.

In reference to the publications, Ricardo López Göttig drafted the reports "Looking for a safe place: origins and evolution of Zionism", "How did global Jewish conspiracy theories emerge?", "The Soviet Anti-Semitism", "The Shoah denial" and "Argentine anti-Jews authors"; and the lawyer Verónica Repond, CADAL's associated researcher, was in charge of the monthly anti-Semite Comments in news websites in Argentina Monitoring report. The current publication precisely offers a summary and an analysis of the monthly monitoring produced during 2014.

All project's activities, including each monthly monitoring with respective anti-Semite comments literally copied, can be found at <http://www.puentedemocratico.org/tolerancia/>. Finally, CADAL wants to thank PADF's trust for the implementation of this project, especially Luisa Villegas and Pedro Dana for a continuous stimulus and support and all the people who generously participated in some of the activities produced as part of this initiative. We specially highlight the priceless task produced by Ricardo López Göttig and Verónica Repond.

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I. Introduction

On October 3, 2013, the Safety Ethics initiative from Gabriel García Márquez's Fundación para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano launched a debate on Twitter with the following question: Is it time to remove comments from news websites?¹ The debate invitation was preceded by conclusions from a scientific study produced by the University of Wisconsin – Madison² under which “rude comments wrote by users of news websites pervert the original message the author wants to communicate and confuse other readers”. For our topic of discussion, anti-Semitism and 2014 annual monitoring results, what was stated by the study of the aforementioned university is a matter of concern. Indeed, in the study which involved 1.183 participants who read the comments published in a science blog made for the occasion, the volunteers exposed to rude and negative comments ended forming more polarized opinions than those who read other kind of opinions. If conclusions of University of Wisconsin's report are true, the registered comments in CADAL's monitoring could reflect a growth of anti-Semitism in Argentina and from there, a growing concern as expressed by organization from the Jewish community.

Indeed, according to 2013 annual report published by the Centre for Social Studies of Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA)³, Internet is one of the ten contexts where the greatest quantity of complaints about anti-Semitic facts was registered. Other contexts are public spaces, communitarian institutions, communication mediums, private addresses, educative institutions, public transports, neighborhood and public offices.

According to the aforesaid report, the comment section of media websites is in turn one of the thirteen internet platforms which registered anti-Semitic expressions. The other twelve are Facebook, Twitter, Taringa, YouTube, blogs, websites, forums, hacking, email, Google references, applications and articles. Thereon, the 2013 report about anti-Semitism in Argentina of the DAIA indicates that whether it is using an own blog, through videos on YouTube, by using Facebook pages or using open comment spaces as a media which admit most of graphical media as digital newspapers, the common denominator they share is the spread of anti-Semitic manifestations which are looking for anonymity and hence to impunity.

The anti-Semitic comment monitoring on websites of the Republic of Argentina's media implemented by the

Democratic Bridge Program of CADAL from October 2013 until February 2015 focused in only one of the varied current forms of this discriminatory behavior. This option for the monitoring implementation has been chosen considering as the most innovative, able to provide alternative information of which other institutions had already offered, such as DAIA which already warned in 2011: “As time goes by, with an increasing penetration in society, due to a lack of legislation and inactive companies and government sectors, Internet is about to become the spot chosen by some netizens to spread messages and discriminatory contents all over the world. Anonymity on the Internet provides a certain sensation of impunity to users, which is reflected in articles and comments which many probably wouldn't dare repeating it in front of another person, in a traditional massive media or in a crowded auditorium”.

The current 2014 annual report of the anti-Semite comment monitoring on websites of the Republic of Argentina's media includes: categories taken by anti-Semitic expressions with examples from each one of them, results and trends registered and finally, some reflections about the challenge the communication mediums have to face the growth of intolerance on the internet.

II. Categories and examples of anti-Semitic expressions included in the monitoring

The categories of anti-Semitic expressions used to produce the monitoring have been adapted from those used by the DAIA's annual report defined as “those communication/symbolic (invariant) order structures in which Jewish as a social group, or some members, are designated in a derogatory or hostile way according to some damage or a historic character stigma, finding or not some links with pinned situations in the present aggression”. To the effects of publishing the monitoring results in this annual report, the categories are divided in classic anti-Semitic expressions and contemporaneous anti-Semitic expressions.

a) Classic anti-Semitic expressions

Insult/grievance: those referring to Jews in offensive terms.

Theological/religious anti-Semitism: It is related to deicide charges, discriminations, disparagement or exclusions in virtue of non-acceptance of Messiah,

¹ <http://eticasegura.fnpi.org/2013/10/03/tuitdebate-es-hora-de-eliminar-los-comentarios-en-las-paginas-web-de-noticias/>

² <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcc4.12009/abstract>

³ <http://www.daia.org.ar/2013/uploads/documentos/97/informe2013%20completo.pdf>

presumed betrayals or kids ritual slaughter appeals.

Greed appeal/exploitation: References to the Jews as avaricious, exploitive or who use money in any way to extort or to make a member of civil society suffer.

Nationalist anti-Semitism: It is related to discriminatory expressions wherein “the Jewish” is opposed to “the national” whether it is in religious terms, communal concerns or simply as an agent who has no right to reside in the country.

International Jewish conspiracy (economic, political and social): Mostly related to the rhetoric established in “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, it generally refers a conspiracy character from Jews or from “Jewish power”, his supposed willingness or real capacity to dominate countries and international organizations “from the shadows”.

Nazi symbolism: Includes all expressions wherein are used any element which refers to the national socialist symbolism (for example a gammadion cross, SS bolts, idolatry of Nazism or its figures, etc.) in a demanding way or with an aggressive spirit, as well as reproductions of the Nazi rhetoric, among them the “impure blood” references, the biology or distinct genetic, soap production, etc.

Holocaust negation/dilution: Applied to comments which not only consider Shoah had never existed but also those which call into questions some of its elements or events. Thus, some refer to an inferior number of deceased openly known or that gas chambers were not real, etc. Banalization of the Holocaust: Holocaust references to disqualify punishable present facts. Those expressions were included in the first reports and were deleted afterwards following the DAIA’s criterion.

b) Contemporaneous anti-Semite expressions

DAIA’s report assembles them in the “Middle East” category and refer them to all those discursive anti-Semite structures used to criticize the State of Israel, the Zionist Movement or generally the Jews.

Denial of the State of Israel’s right to exist: They suggest the State of Israel’s extinction itself.

Disparagement of the State of Israel: Considering those comments which assign pervert qualities to their constitutive elements (population, institutions, territory). We do not contemplate those comments referring to determined leaders of government, political party and/or Israeli personalities nor critics of accomplished actions by a specific government. Moreover, we identify the disparagement of the State of Israel as a veiled way of Judeophobia owing to many of those comments show up in notes which do not refer to the said State but refer to some event related with the Jewish community and however the users take advantage of this opportunity to express themselves against Israel. We have warned that many forum participants who criticize Israel, but in any way consider themselves as anti-Semite, in the same note ended up referring then to Jews in a contemptuous and/or disrespectful way. That way, we conclude that, in many cases, the critic of Israel is based in some Judeophobia.

Double allegiance: It is related to allegations which are associated to a nationalist idea of conceiving the individual who, because of holding certain nationality, couldn’t have an affective link with another country because it would involve disloyalty to his native country. We shall see in this point that Jews are not only accused of being affectively linked to Israel but answering to this country’s interests at the expense of their native country. We include this classification as anti-Semite considering that Jews are being reproached for such behavior but no other argentinians enjoying dual nationality from their ancestry’s place of origin.

Identification of Jews as Israeli nationality holders: Related to comments which consider Jewish people as holding Israeli nationality, by the very fact of being a Jew, and therefore responsible of the events caused in this country.

Disparagement of the Zionist Movement: We take into consideration comments which assign wicked qualities to Zionism as a total, a homogeneous set of people, as for instance criminality, economic and political global control. Just as DAIA, we understand that Zionism is a Judaism expression which assumes right of self-determination and the existence of the State of Israel. Thus, its disqualification can’t be differently understood unless a fight against a part of Jewish identity and hence to anti-Semitism.

c) Results of the monitoring: 2014 trends

To produce the monitoring, expressions published in open forums for discussions have been observed, mainly in different news stories of the newspapers “La Nación” and “Clarín”, on their online version, and the Infobae website. The job consisted of selecting those comments which in an ostensible and veiled way express Judeophobia. We say it in a veiled way because many critical comments about Israel or about the Zionist Movement are hiding a real Jewish rejection. During 2014, a total of 256 news stories were analyzed whereof 156 were published in “La Nación”, 99 in “Clarín” and 1 in “Infobae”, registering 4384 comments with anti-Semite expressions.

The classic anti-Semite expressions reached 53% of comments: insult/grievance, 961; Nazi symbolism, 348; theological/religious anti-Semitism, 253; Nationalist anti-Semitism, 224; Holocaust denial/dilution, 207; international Jewish conspiracy (economic, political and social), 202; and Greed appeal/exploitation, 131.

For its part, 47% of comments corresponded to contemporaneous anti-Semite expressions: disparagement of the State of Israel, 1229; disparagement of the Zionist Movement, 632; denial of the State of Israel right to exist, 73; double allegiance, 70; and identification of Jews as Israeli nationality holders, 54. Even

though it is obvious that many of the 4384 anti-Semite comments were made by the same person, it is relevant as well to considerate the context. For instance, some 2014 facts received some media coverage as former prime minister Ariel Sharon’s death, Pope Francis’ visit to Jerusalem, the Gaza strip conflict, but in the Argentine case, everything regarding to Cristina Kirchner’s government agreement with Iran regarding the attacks on the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA).

Month	Articles
January	37
February	23
March	21
April	20
May	37
June	27
July	20
August	11
September	14
October	10
November	19
December	17

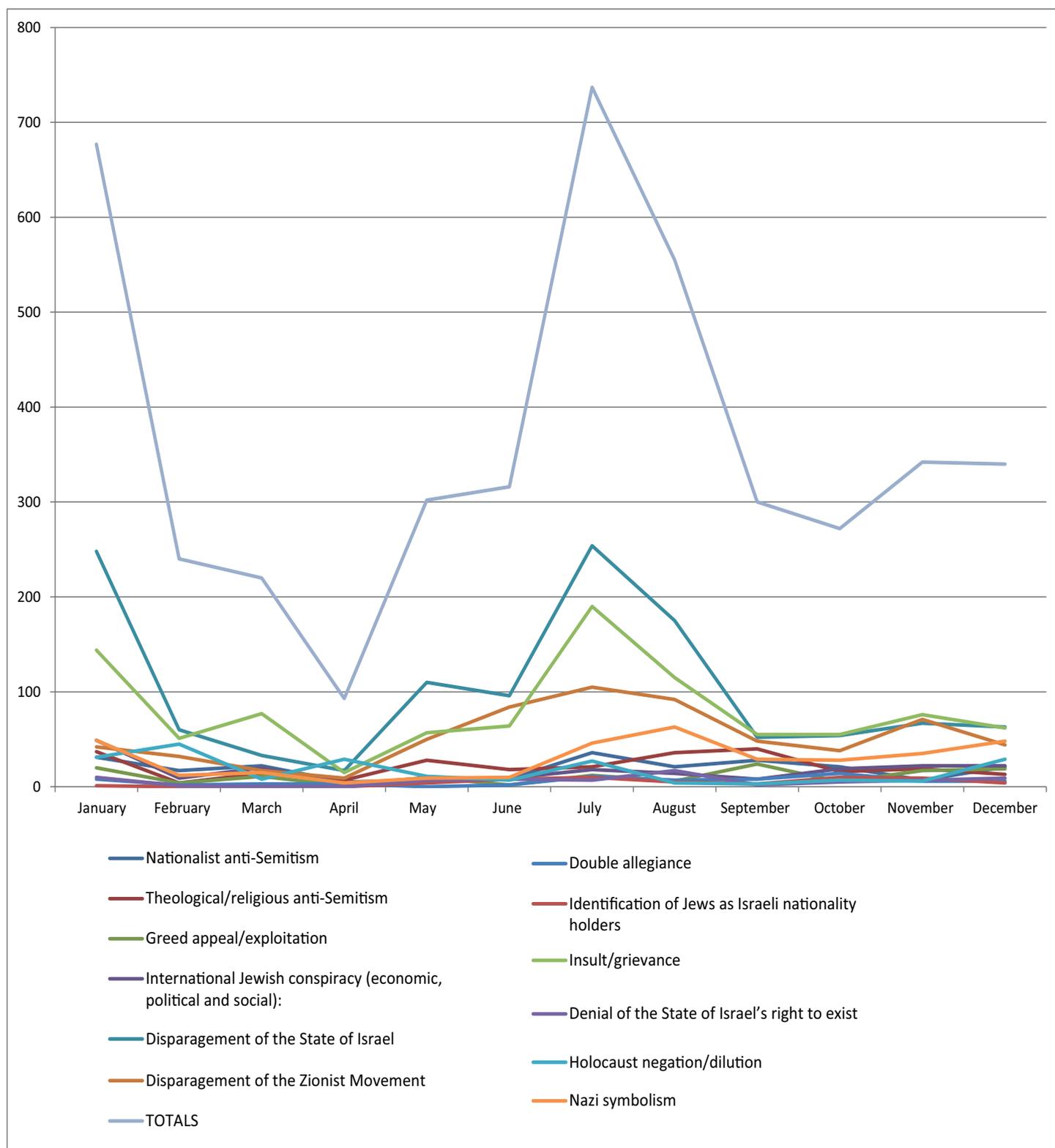
Category per anti-Semite expression	Comments	Per centaje
Disparagement of the State of Israel	1229	27,9%
Insult/grievance	961	21,9%
Disparagement of the Zionist Movement	632	14,5%
Nazi symbolism	348	8%
Theological/religious anti-Semitism	253	5,8%
Nationalist anti-Semitism	224	5,1%
Holocaust negation/dilution	207	4,7%
International Jewish conspiracy (economic, political and social)	202	4,6%
Greed appeal/exploitation	131	3%
Denial of the State of Israel’s right to exist	73	1,7%
Double allegiance	70	1,6%
Identification of Jews as Israeli nationality holders	54	1,2%
TOTALS	4384	100%

In other instances, the news stories which had some comments were those labeled as “colorful”, like the case of a Colombian with Argentine travel document, surnamed “Matajudios” (“Kills Jews”), the entitled “The sophisticated taste of Hitler by eating stuffed pigeon” or “How the world loved the swastika – until the Nazi stole it”.

Even though most of news stories analyzed in the monitoring talk about information from abroad, at the local level predomination came from news linked with the claims for the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA attacks in Buenos Aires, in 1992 and 1994 respectively, organizations’ reactions as DAIA in light of particular facts and to a lesser extent, occasional events generated in the country. Amongst those news stories, “A man who was selling Nazi symbolism was sentenced to give classes at the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) and at the Holocaust Museum”, “Jorge Macri cancelled a controversial event about Hitler’s mistress”, “Who is Alex Gordon, the owner of Nac&Pop who disappeared in debts” and “Buenos Aires has a statue which remains Ann Franck, the girl who described the Holocaust” are highlighted.

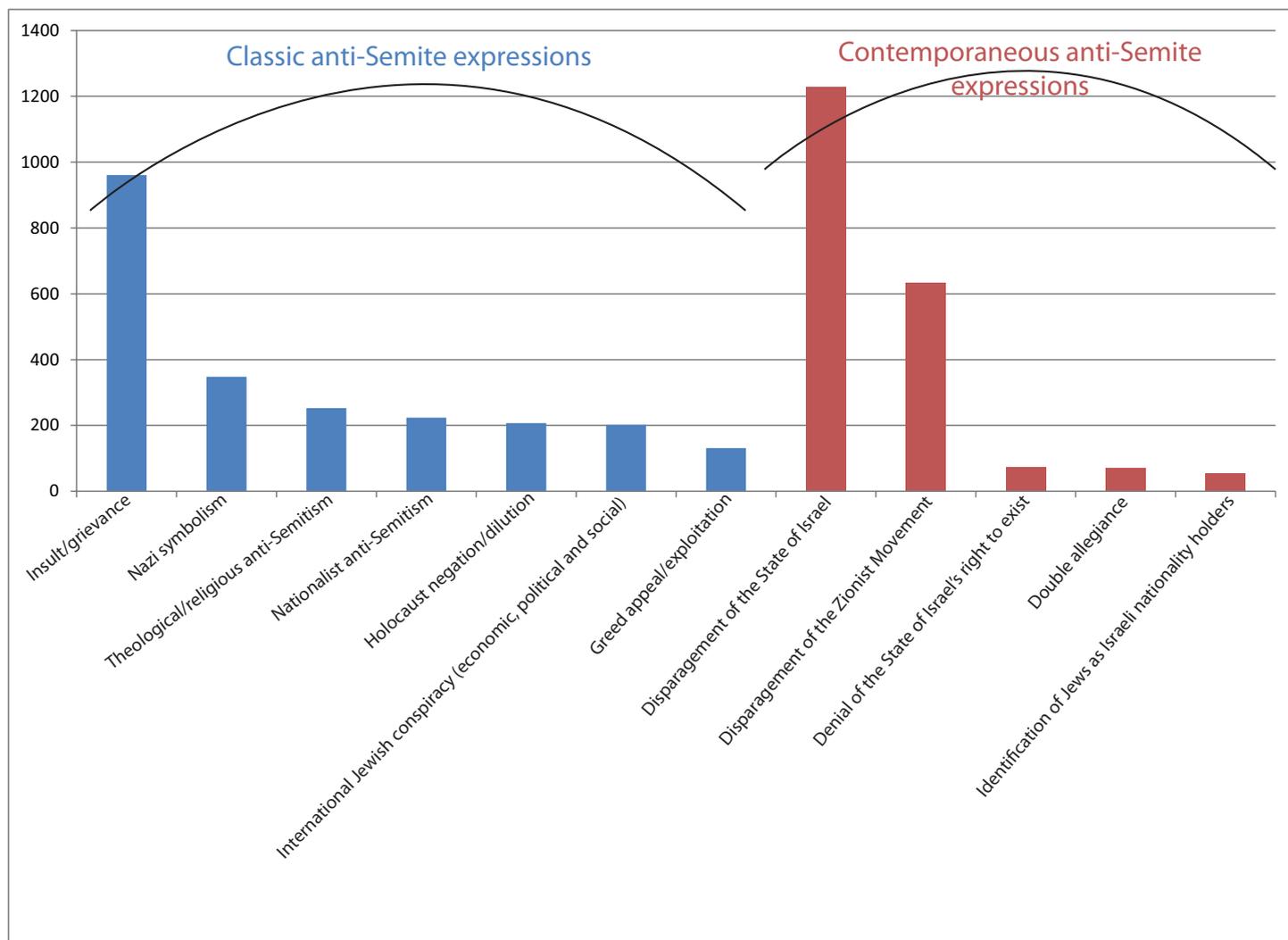
One of the news stories to highlight is the only one from Infobae entitled “Unusual discriminatory campaign against

Total number of anti-Semitic comments and by type of expression, January - December 2014



Jews in Patagonia”, published last December. This fact is really worrying and it is advisable to keep monitoring cases such as this one, plus others which are locally generated and contain classic anti-Semitic expressions. It must be taken into consideration that according to the ADL Global 100 Anti-Semitism Index, a survey about the behavior towards Jews in more than 100 countries around the world, Argentina is ranked 69 with 24% of consulted sites which host anti-Semitic behaviors.

Total number of anti-Semite comments by type of expression



d) A challenge for media outlets

This monitoring offers another element to the debate started inside media outlets about what to do with open comments in forums of discussions, when they are used to express intolerant opinions which are, in many cases, liable to criminal prosecutions. Thereon, it is interesting to quote some of the statements by speakers at the “Anti-Semitism on the Internet and the freedom of expression” conference that took place on August 21, 2014 at the Argentinian press auditorium: Ariel Seidler, Director of the Observatorio Web; Sergio Widder, Director of Latin America at Centro Simón Wiesenthal; and Sergio Danishewsky, Pro secretary of the newspaper “Clarín”. The three speakers have addressed many questionings raised by Etica Segura’s debate on Twitter: What responsibility do media outlets have for the comments hosted on their websites? Are media doing some kind of quality control on comments made by their visitors? How do those comments influence the perception other readers have regarding the news they read and the outlet

that publishes it? Is it correct to erase the possibility to comment news?

Ariel Seidler:

- “Rule 9091 is applied to the Internet, which means, 90% of people only read, 9% comment sporadically and 1% is active”.
- “A survey says that 75% of young people believe in what they read on the Internet”.
- “Anti-Semitism grows when Israel is in the news”.

Sergio Widder:

- “It is a craziness criticizing technology for broadcasting some anti-Semite comments”.
- “Our policy is to avoid involving governments. We do not support censorship”.
- “In an important media company, there must be effective controls, but it proves it still hasn’t yet”.

⁴ <http://global100.adl.org/es>

Sergio Danishewsky:

- “With the experience knowing which news story was going to get anti-Semite comments, we closed those news stories and we had to close others with open comments because of a foreign embarrassment”.
- “Many times, comments to defend freedom of expression and to attract attention of more people to the news are left”.
- “There’s a progress trying to identify the person who comments but this possibility is still very limited”.
- “No journalist is trained to censure comments”.
- “Most of violence is registered in the news stories which are related to the State of Israel”.

Let’s see some observations from DAIA’s last report:

- One of the subjects that generates most worrying is the lack of filters or moderators in comments from news stories of virtual newspapers, which let the possibility for anyone to write illegal comments. A news story that informs can’t be proceeded by sentences which generate hatred for a collectivity or an ethnic group now that it is contrary to the Anti-discrimination Law.
- Even though many meetings have been seek with different newspapers, the problem isn’t solved yet and in light of a news story which relates to Jewish people, Jewish activities or Jewish commemorations, they sprout a set of offensive comments which in no way are linked with the original news story and which clearly avoid the aforementioned norm.

As an example of what Sergio Danishewsky mentioned and the requests made by the DAIA, in the monitoring achieved in November and December of 2014 it was noted that many sensitive notes didn’t allow comments. In the past two months of 2014, the newspaper “La Nación” hasn’t allowed comments on these following notes:

18/11/2014: Jerusalem synagogue attack: three victims were Americans and one was British
<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1744868-atentado-en-una-sinagoga-en-jerusalen-tres-victimas-eran-estadounidenses-y-uno-britanico>

18/11/2014: At least six persons have died in a synagogue attack in Jerusalem
<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1744833-jerusalen-atentado-sinagoga-muertos>

The newspaper “Clarín” have done likewise in the following stories:

21/11/2014: Anti-Semitism on the Web has increased by 38% in six years
http://www.clarin.com/sociedad/antisemitismo-DAIA-web_0_1252674785.html

21/11/2014: Middle East: where only smile falcons
http://www.clarin.com/mundo/Oriente-Medio-solo-sonrien-halcones_0_1252675165.html

23/11/2014: A Palestine house in Cisjordania was burned out
http://www.clarin.com/mundo/Cisjordania-incendios_0_1253874703.html

05/12/2014: Israel: risky extreme nationalism’s gamble
http://www.clarin.com/mundo/Israel-riesgosas-apuestas-nacionalismo-extremo_0_1261074332.html

22/12/2014: Israel, key elections for the future of the region
http://www.clarin.com/opinion/Israel-Likud-Netanyahu-Palestina_0_1271272893.html

And in the following story in the newspaper “Clarín”, 26 comments are not displayed on the page:

09/12/2014: A statue of Anne Frank is already in Buenos Aires
http://www.clarin.com/cultura/Ana_Frank-escultura-de_Ana_Frank-Holocausto_0_1263473976.html

As an argument in favor of publishing comments in media’s open forums, the participants of Eticas Segura’s debate on Twitter pointed: “erasing media’s messages would be missing readers’ proximity and feedback”; “Erasing isn’t the option. Interactivity is sought and it can be launched by those debates. Filtered and examined”; and “Moderate with quality is first of all listening to the audience for which the rules of the game must be clearly set”.

However another participant has warned that “comments on the news made sense before social networks”. Indeed, it is suggested that providing tool’s media to share its content on Twitter or Facebook, it implies the possibility to add a comment and in this way the open forum doesn’t make any sense.

In an interesting work by Juan Mascardi entitled “Is this the end of comments in digital media?”, the author suggests that “with the advent of web journalism, media’s convergence and the landing on the web of media more used to radio messages and readers’ letters, a strategy deficit, the lack of investments in the incorporation of professionals trained for moderating the audience have transformed the democratic promise into a farce, a

representation of an underpinned dialogue only in the verbal incontinence, insult and provocation. Including many times the disqualification of authors scrutinizing their personal lives”.

In conclusion, the debate over media outlets’ responsibility of comments hosted on their websites is

open, considering that those are their property. At the same time we can reflect on a definition by Mexican José Antonia Aguilar Rivera, of his “Cyberdemocratism critic”, published in 2010 and mentioned by Mascardi: “The freedom of expression doesn’t mean that all the expressions deserve or must be published”.

Find the Annex and more information in Spanish at: <http://puentedemocratico.org/informes/pdf/MonitoreoAntisemitismoReporteAnual2014.pdf>